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Rights of indigenous peoples

Note verbale dated 18 July 2014 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of the Secretary-General and has the honour to request that the present letter and the statement of the International Colloquium on Indigenous Cultures entitled "Present challenges of the indigenous peoples of America" (see annex) be circulated at the earliest opportunity as a document of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under item 66.

The statement is considered to be an important contribution to the forthcoming World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in September, and transmits the sincere commitment of many countries in the region to the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and the full realization of those rights, as well as the joint efforts of countries and representatives of indigenous peoples.

* A/69/150.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 18 July 2014 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Spanish]

Statement of the International Colloquium on Indigenous Cultures entitled "Present challenges of the indigenous peoples of America"

The International Colloquium on Indigenous Cultures entitled "Present challenges of the indigenous peoples of America", held in Havana from 5 to 9 August 2014, was attended by representatives of the Amuzga, Asháninka, Aymara, Caribe, Colla, Kichwa, Kuna, Mapuche, Maya k'iche', Maya kaqchikel, Miskito, Nahua, Pemón, Quechua and Taíno indigenous peoples, who came from Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and Cuba, as well as by representatives of the States of Bolivia, Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba. During the event, the main problems faced by the indigenous peoples of the continent were debated in the very voices of the protagonists.

One of the essential themes was the organizational process for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held on 22 and 23 September 2014 at United Nations Headquarters with the purpose of evaluating the instruments of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Taking into consideration the availability of a so-called "zero draft" of the final document to be adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2014, which was analysed at the Colloquium, the following remarks were made:

- While the existence of a "zero draft" was valued positively, there was concern regarding the wording of some aspects that might rewrite the minimum norms contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It was argued that there was a need to strengthen the language of certain elements of the draft;
- Member States, the United Nations system and indigenous peoples themselves were urged to review and create the pertinent conditions and mechanisms for full and effective participation, which should be among peers, representative, generational and on an equal footing;
- It was confirmed that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was an essential instrument of human rights;
- The importance of international cooperation to achieve effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was emphasized;
- Aspects related to the possible results of the World Conference were highlighted and viewed as confirming, to a large extent, the advances made during the first and second decades of the world's indigenous peoples. The pressing need for new commitments from Member States for the effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

Peoples, particularly through the creation of evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, was underlined;

- A call was made for decisive commitments made at other international forums and events that have been taking place as part of the process to be included, mainly the recommendations resulting from the Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held in Alta, Norway, from 10 to 12 June 2013;
- It was decided to promote content that would make it possible to overcome the discrimination and violence directed against indigenous peoples;
- The mass media were also urged to disseminate, in a responsible and ethical manner, information on the process and results of the World Conference;
- Interest was expressed in the celebration of a world summit of indigenous peoples;
- The importance of drawing up a schedule towards the adoption of an international convention on the rights of indigenous peoples was evaluated;
- A plea was made for States to demonstrate the will and political sensibility needed to arrive at concrete results during the World Conference that are oriented towards an action plan that will not imply a regression with regard to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples but will substantially fulfil the expectations of indigenous peoples regarding individual and collective rights;
- Member States were urged to ensure the participation of representatives of organizations of indigenous peoples during the negotiation process and the World Conference. Likewise, the countries of the group of friends of indigenous peoples were encouraged to continue supporting the demands and proposals of those peoples.

It was decided to submit the above considerations as a contribution to the third session of interactive consultations to be held, as part of the preparatory process, at United Nations Headquarters starting on 18 August 2014.